

Latin American Meeting for the Conservation of Cetaceans

I. The Commissioners of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Panamá and Perú to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) met in the City of Buenos Aires on 4 and 5 December 2007. The meeting was also attended by the Ambassadors of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras and the Dominican Republic, as well as diplomatic observers from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The meeting was opened by the Vice Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic, Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, and the Under-Secretary for Planning and Environmental Policy of the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Argentine Republic, Mr. Miguel Pellerano.

II. The attendees gave their welcome to Uruguay for rejoining the IWC and the designation of their Commissioner, Ambassador Alvaro Gallardo. A special acknowledgment to the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of the Republic of Nicaragua for their decision to support the policy of cetacean conservation in the framework of the IWC. Likewise they congratulated the Republic of Colombia, the Dominican Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the efforts they are making to adhere to the Convention.

III. In the framework of a consultation process at a regional level agreed upon in the “Buenos Aires Declaration” and in subsequent regional meetings, the Latin American States present at this meeting analyzed matters related to cetacean conservation in Latin America and strengthened the coordination of their policies within this field.

IV. In order to meet the above objectives, participants agreed to “ The Latin American Cooperative Strategy for the Conservation of Cetaceans” which promotes increased coordination of the countries in the region in the International Whaling Commission (IWC), as well as in other international organizations which address the topic of cetacean conservation, and defines guidelines for regional cooperation.

V. During the meeting the participants analyzed the activities and the future of the IWC. On this matter, participants agreed that one of the necessary central ideas in the discussion about up-dating the organization must be the non-lethal use of cetaceans, the strengthening of conservation issues in the regular activities of the Commission and the creation of whale Sanctuaries, such as, for example, those in the Southern Atlantic and Southern Pacific.

VI. The necessity of strengthening the participation of developing countries in the different sub-groups of the Commission was highlighted, as well as initiating a transparent dialogue among the blocs representing different positions at the IWC. Within this framework, the States of the Region present at the meeting welcomed the holding of the IWC inter-sessional meeting in the United Kingdom on March 2008, at which the region hopes to play a constructive role in favour of such a dialogue for which it would be necessary to have a wide representation of the Commissioners of the countries of the Buenos Aires Group.

VII. Likewise, attendants agreed on the need of a greater participation of the region's scientists in the next annual meeting of the IWC (Santiago de Chile, May-June 2008) taking into account that the agendas of the Committee include the treatment of regionally distributed species. In this regard, the proposal formulated in the 59th Meeting of the IWC was recalled, to include population of southern right whales of the Southeastern Pacific in the agenda of the Conservation Committee

VIII. The firm regional commitment to the maintenance of the moratorium on the hunting of cetaceans in the present context of the IWC was reaffirmed, and the urgent need in this sense to rely on the best scientific evidence with respect to cetacean populations, with an effective compliance regime that reflects the best international practices in this matter, and respect for the non-lethal use of cetaceans as a management option.

IX. The participants underlined the statements made in the Buenos Aires Declarations of 2005 and 2006 to pursue –in a joint and coordinated manner– the oversight and rejection of commercial hunting and lethal scientific research.

X. To support the continuity and the progress of those works done on cetacean killing methods and on animal welfare in the IWC.

XI. Reaffirming what was stated in Resolution 2007-5, approved by consensus in the 59th annual IWC Meeting, the participants welcomed the efforts made by the Mexican government in support of the conservation of the critically threatened Gulf of California porpoise, or Vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*), making themselves available, to this country, in accordance with their capacities, the technical resources of the region, and urging other countries to join.

XII. To recognize the importance of organizations and institutions addressing cetacean conservation and research to participate in the activities of the Latin American Commissioners, as well as to participate in a more active and effective way in the IWC and other international fora.

XIII. Participants agreed to keep the “Buenos Aires Group” in permanent consultation on the topics analyzed and deemed it important to continue holding periodic meetings to monitor the activities and to rotate the venue for future meetings of the Group. In this regard they agreed on the convening a meeting prior to the 60 annual IWC Meeting.

XIV. The delegation from the Dominican Republic mentioned the regional and hemispheric importance of the Marine Mammal Sanctuary, located within its jurisdictional waters and invited the Buenos Aires Group to support this action initiated in 1986.

XV. Attending Commissioners, Representatives and Observers voiced their satisfaction with the result of the meeting and thanked Argentina for its hospitality and for the excellent organization and development of the meeting.